

Labor of Love

A passion for families drives a Lehigh Valley mother and her daughter



Natalie Shisslak Krause calls her mom the parenting guru of the Lehigh Valley. Her mother, Deanna Shisslak, manages the parenting education program for Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) – a labor of love that connects her to thousands of expectant parents, families, and grandparents looking for education and advice.

Mother and daughter both share a passion for health care and education. Like her mom, Natalie is nationally certified on car seat safety and recently completed a course to become a clinical lactation counselor. Natalie is also a pediatric nurse at Lehigh Valley Children's Hospital.

Recently, we talked about their desire to help families, and how the birth and parenting experience has changed over the years.

Q | How is the millennial generation changing the pregnancy and delivery experience?

DEANNA: Women are more informed and want to be active participants in their care. They want options, and their health care team is listening. We now have nursing support to follow a pregnant woman's care from her first prenatal visit until after baby arrives.

NATALIE: Women are developing personal relationships with their care team, and that support is really welcome. They're also discussing options with their provider to create a personal birth experience when it's medically appropriate.

Q | What does a personal birth experience look like?

DEANNA: When women give birth at our Family Birth and Newborn Center in Allentown – and soon in our brand-new facility in Bethlehem – they have options to manage the discomforts of labor, like rocking chairs, birthing balls, or walking around. Warm water also helps, so we're adding hydrotherapy in our new Bethlehem location.

NATALIE: My husband, Brian, and I wanted to be active participants during delivery. Cora was laid skin-to-skin on me directly after birth to promote bonding and support breastfeeding. Some families choose delayed cord clamping. That helps the baby get more oxygen-rich blood.

Deanna Shisslak (left), in her New Tripoli, Pa. home with granddaughter Cora (20 months) and daughter Natalie Shisslak Krause, who is expecting her second child this April.

Q | How has parenting education changed over the years?

DEANNA: We seek wisdom and support from our previous generation. That's still important. Since medical evidence is constantly evolving, classes can reinforce what's learned from providers and help parents and grandparents stay up to date in support of each other.

NATALIE: Life is busy for working moms and dads. Classes ensure everyone has current and accurate medical information. Many people don't realize the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children remain in a rear-facing car seat until age 2 – that cradles children and reduces the risk for spinal cord injuries. In addition to helping families use their car seats correctly, our new facility in Bethlehem will offer our full line of prenatal classes, including preparing for labor and childbirth, new baby care, breastfeeding, CPR, grandparenting, and more.

Q | You're both fond of the saying "It takes a village." Can you tell me about that?

DEANNA: Grandparents are more involved than ever. We want to support our children while respecting their parenting philosophy. We're part of that village too.

NATALIE: It's OK to accept help from family and friends, whether that means walking the dog, folding the wash, or making a meal. Support for breastfeeding moms is really important too.

Q | What pregnancy and parenting books do you recommend?

DEANNA: LVHN gives expectant mothers a free Baby Bundle package, consisting of a book, and a mobile app, at their first appointment.

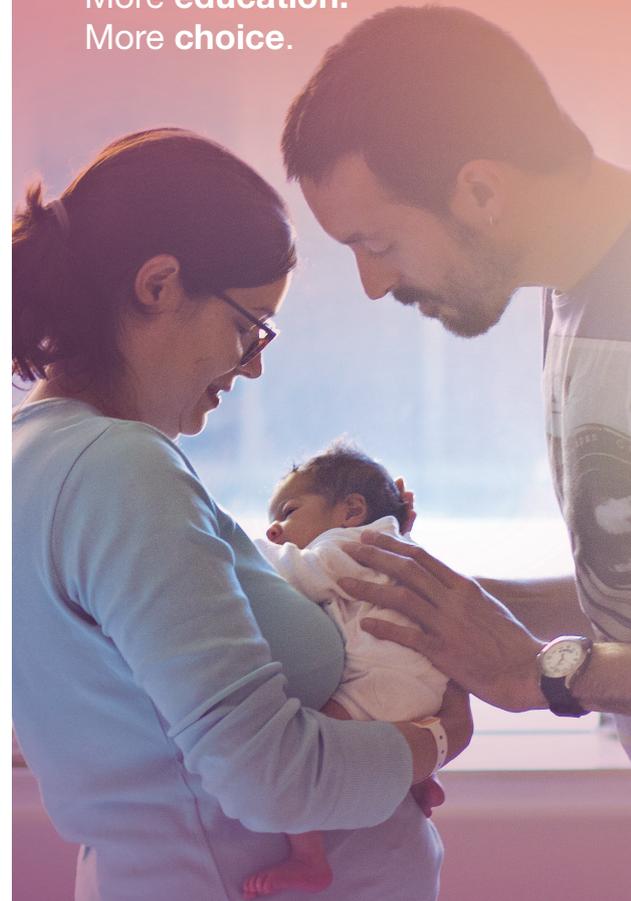
NATALIE: I'm expecting my second child, and I'm following the baby's growth and development on my phone through the Baby Bundle app. Every week, we look to see how the baby is developing and track it together as a couple. I also seek advice from my mom. Her passion and wisdom give me confidence to be a great parent.

LVHN gives expectant mothers a free Baby Bundle package!



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